

The Ballarat Naturalist

November 2016



Presentations by members

A very interesting and enjoyable evening was held on the Friday meeting night when six members shared their knowledge and the results of their experiences and skills. The members were Carol Hall, Emily Noble, Indra Bone, Bill and Kathy Elder and Andy Arnold.

Carol Hall described her visits to Lal Lal Falls on two occasions over 2 weeks. The first time was after the regular winter rains, then again after 50mm had fallen overnight on 2nd/3rd October with continuing heavy showers.



The difference in speed and volume of the water was considerable. On the second occasion the valley and paddocks above the falls were flooded and the weir was well below the surface of the creek. A tree on the bank which had been lightly brushed by the earlier flow was now an island in the midst of a rushing torrent.

The Falls were spectacular, as was the noise. A steady flow of visitors made their way to the viewing platform. The discoloured water carried volumes of sediment into Bungal Dam which was full. Carol's photos compared the flow on the two occasions and she also in-

cluded a shot of the Falls completely dry during the drought in 2008.



As a contrast, Carol had also been fascinated by the minute drops of water which had collected on the emerging Pussy Willow blossoms around Lake Wendouree. These close-up shots had been taken with a view to enjoying the aesthetic aspects of the natural world.

Carol Hall

Emily Noble: Something that is interesting me at the moment

Whilst out hand-weeding one day, with exotic grasses and one rogue Bluebell Creeper, *Billardiera heterophylla* as my targets, I heard a distinctive buzzing and looked up to catch sight of an unusual bee landing on a Bluebell Creeper leaf. It was moving on the leaf in a way that was new to me and looked very curious.



Leaning in to take a closer look, I realised that it was cutting a rounded section out of the leaf, which it then flew off with. A few minutes later it came back and repeated the process. (See photo on the left.) I tried following it when it flew off to see where it was taking the sections of leaf but soon lost it, so I headed for Google and discovered that it was a delightful leaf-cutter bee known as a Golden-browed Resin Bee, *Megachile aurifrons*. I learned that this solitary bee nests in narrow holes wherever it can find them, using

the leaf sections as bedroom walls for its babies, one egg and a nectar bundle between each pair of leaves.

Two weeks later, I heard the recognisable buzz again, and saw the bee land on a sapling gum tree leaf. This time it was chewing up narrow leaf segments and presumably flying off when its mouth was full of fibrous “resin”. (Photo on right.)

I managed to keep track of it flying to its nest this time, just 10 metres away in an unused screw-hole in our wooden door-frame. (See



photo on the left.) There it formed up an unpalatable protective cover over the entrance to its nest using its mouthful of resin, a process that I now saw had been employed several times on the door-frame. They have been covered for 6 months and I am keeping an eye on them, hoping to see the young insects emerge. I only recently found out that they are a pollinator of Hyacinth Orchids, which flower over summer.

The other things I have found stimulating my interest of late have been three tiny species of plants: the Austral Adder’s Tongue *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*, the Pygmy Clubmoss *Phylloglossum drummondii*, and the Pygmy Sundew *Drosera pygmaea*. Whilst out “botanizing” a few weeks ago, Bill M. and I unexpectedly came across the tiny fern known as the Austral Adder’s Tongue. It was the first time either of us had seen it, and growing to just two or three centimetres tall, that probably isn’t surprising.

There had been only one official recording of it at Mt Beckworth previously, in quite a different location to where we were standing, by Dr Jim Willis, botanist of the National Herbarium of Victoria, in 1963.

Similarly with the Pygmy Clubmoss, (photo on right) a fern ally I found recently at



Dereel This is a very unusual plant with deciduous leaves approximately 1cm long in a basal rosette and a flower stalk up to 3cm high is very easy to overlook. (Insert photo IMG_6076). Having never been recorded in Dereel before, the closest official record was logged by Cliff Beauglehole in 1980 in Smythesdale, probably when he was surveying with the late Pat Murphy for the Land Conservation Council Report for the Ballarat area. It is time to update these records!

I have only seen Pygmy Drosera once, on a field trip in Dereel with this club last October but was fascinated to read about their vegetative reproduction method in “*Plants of Prey*” by Rica Erickson, a second-hand book I picked up at the recent ANG AIR Wildflower Show. Some of the leaves bear a minute bud that grows into a tiny rosette, forcing the leaf to drop off and allow the baby plant to take root. This phenomenon is most successful in wet years, with the parent plant appearing to brood over her chicks.

Emily Noble

Indra’s trip to far Nth Queensland



Indra Bone presented a series of wildlife photographs from his recent trip to Far North Queensland. Photos included a Southern Cassowary taken in South Mission Beach, Bush Stones-curlews in Mission Beach and a small bat, possibly a Coastal Sheath-tail taken in Cape Tribulation.

Indra Bone

Excursion – Sunday Oct 9, 2016 –

Part 1 - Orchids around Scarsdale

Some 15 keen field naturalists attended at Bill and Kathy Elder’s property, “Stringybark” in Skippers Rd. They were joined by Ian Clarke, Kathy’s brother who is also a botanist, author and illustrator of *Name That Flower* and *Name Those Grasses*. Ian worked in the Botany department of Melbourne University for many years and also at the National Herbarium in Melbourne.

The group walked around the eight hectares of Stringybark and were delighted to find a host of flowering native plants, orchids, lilies and

forbs. The property boasts several species of eucalypt including red and Brown Stringybark *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* and *E. baxteri* respectively, Messmate *E. obliqua*, Swamp Gum *E. ovata*, Candlebark *E. rubida*, Narrow-leaved Peppermint *E. radicata* and Yarra Gum *E. yarraensis*.^b There were three wattles – Silver Wattle *Acacia dealbata*, Blackwood *A. melanoxylon*, and the prostrate Snake Wattle *A. aculeatissima* both of which had just finished flowering. Other trees sighted were Cherry Ballart *Exocarpos cupressiformis* and a single Black She-Oak *Allocasuarina lateralis*. Amongst the smaller shrubs, Silky Tea-tree *Leptospermum myrsinoides*, Spiny-headed Mat Rush *Lomandra longifolia* and Small Grass Tree *Xanthorrhoea minor* were abundant and all three were starting to flower. We also enjoyed the bright pea plants – Narrow-leaved Bitter Pea *Daviesia leptophylla*, Golden Bush Pea *Pultenaea gunnii*, and the ground-hugging Creeping Bossiaea *Bossiaea prostrata* and Purple Coral Pea *Hardenbergia violacea*.

The highlight of this part of the excursion was the profusion of smaller flowering herbs such as Pink Bells *Tetratheca ciliata*, Trailing Goodenia (*Goodenia lanata*), Common Beard-Heath *Leucopogon virgatus*, the endangered Grass Trigger-plant *Stylidium graminifolium*, Creamy Candles *Stackhousia monogyna*, Common Rice-flower *Pimelea humilis*, Ivy-leaved Violet *Viola hederacea* – something for everyone. Considering that this was an orchid excursion, it was fortunate that we were able to add a couple of the more common species to the list – Nodding Greenhood *Pterostylis nutans* and Tall Greenhood *Pterostylis melagramma*. The Lily family was well represented - Early Nancy *Wurmbea dioica*, Twining Fringe-lily *Thysanotus patersonii*, Black-anther Flax-lily *Dianella revoluta*, Blue Star *Chaemascilla corymbosa* with one or more of these species often carpeting the ground. Yellow Star Grass *Hypoxis hirsute*, Tall Sundew *Drosera auriculata* and Scented Sundew *Drosera whittakeri* were on display and numerous. Milkmaids *Burchardia umbellata* and Sun Orchids *Thelymitra* sp. were evident as large numbers of emergent leaves, but no flowers yet. Finally, some keen-eyed ex-

November Sunday excursion

Related to the Fri. lecture, Emily Noble will lead the excursion :

Victorian Volcanic Plains Grasslands, Rokewood, Corindhap

Usual departure from Gillies st at 9.30 Also possible later meeting point at 10 am at Little Hard Hills Hotel

Bring your brochure: *Grassland Species of Vic. Vol. Plains*

plorers discovered no less than three species of the tiny fern-like plant *Centrolepis*, which Ian confirmed later using the updated Flora of Victoria website - well worth a browse - <https://vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au/>

After two hours of field work, we repaired to the house and verandah for lunch. As a special bonus for those attending, Bill gave a quick tour of the house, built last year along sustainable and passive solar principles. Highlights included operable awnings, double-glazing, fire and storm resistant materials and design, off grid power, worm farm treating all waste, solar hot water, LED lighting, cork/recycled rubber flooring.

Bill Elder

Part 2 - Emily in the Enfield State Forest

Next we moved from Bill and Kathy's to the Enfield State Forest, across the road. This area is a Valley Grassy Forest. We soon found Leopard Orchids *Diuris pardina*, in many cases blending in seamlessly with the surrounding Golden Bush-peas *Pultenaea gunnii*. Several large Yam Daisy *Microseris* sp. flowers caught our eye with their radiant golden hue. Vibrant Pink Bells *Tetralthea ciliata* and the occasional Purple Coral-pea *Hardenbergia violacea* added more colour. As we headed through the open forest, we soon came upon vast colonies of the sun orchid known as Rabbit Ears *Thelymitra antennifera* because of its distinctively shaped and coloured column top. They were loose petalled but steadfastly not opening due to the distinct lack of warmth and sunlight. Coming back out to the roadside, three tiny plants from the same family caught our attention: the profuse Dwarf Aphelia, *Aphelia pumilio*, the Hairy Centrolepis, *Centrolepis strigosa* with its densely hairy tussock of tiny leaves, and the Pointed Centrolepis, *Centrolepis aristata*.

Emily Noble

Christmas Breakup

The December Sunday afternoon excursion at Canadian and Buninyong Gardens will include the Christmas Celebration. Details will be available at the Dec. meeting.

Part 3 - Enfield State Park at Staffordshire Reef

We then took the scenic route (to avoid fallen trees strewn across the road) to the area nicknamed by field nat's as Curta Hill in Enfield State Park at Staffordshire Reef. This area is rich in orchids and other wildflowers dominated by Heathy Dry Forest. The first orchids observed were a pair of aptly named Tall Greenhoods *Pterostylis melagramma*. A large expanse of Early Nancies and Arrow-leaved Violet *Viola betonicifolia* drew admiration. The first of many Pink Finger-orchids *Caladenia carnea* and Maroonhoods *Pterostylis pedunculata* appeared, followed closely by several colonies of Small Greencomb Spider Orchids *Caladenia parva*. Only a few Leopard Orchids *Diuris pardina* and Waxlip Orchids *Glossodia major* were seen. Along with a number of the locally common purplish Small Gnat-Orchids *Cyrtostylis reniformis* an unusual green form caught our attention, prompting the question, "Were they hoping to attract a green gnat?" Although they are coming to the end of their flowering period, we found the area's namesake, a Blunt Greenhood *Pterostylis curta*. The first flowering Donkey Orchid *Diuris orientis* in the forest for the year was also spotted by an eagle-eyed field nat. Quite a few Nodding Greenhoods *Pterostylis nutans* were still flowering although many were now proudly displaying their pollinated pods. Another colony of Small Greencomb Spider Orchids again brought delight and frustration...so photogenic, yet so difficult to photograph in the blustery conditions. Despite the wild conditions, the beauty of the forest shone through and the lovely company had us all looking forward to the next field trip.

Bill Elder

Tim Flannery in conversation

Environmentalist ,Tim Flannery at
Lancefield Megafauna Festival

Catch environmentalist Tim Flannery for a special talk about the past, present and future changes to the central Victorian landscape at the Extinct–Lancefield Megafauna Festival.

When: Saturday 26 November, 4pm–5pm

Where: Lancefield Mechanics Institute, Cnr High St & Cres

Cost: Adults \$15 Children \$10

Book: mrsc.vic.gov.au/environment-events

Macedon Ranges Shire Council

Australian Naturalist Network Get-together, Perth, 2016

In 2018, Victorian Field Naturalists, under the auspices of SEANA, are to host the Australian Naturalist Network (ANN) Get-together and John Gregurke is the chief organiser for this major event in Field Naturalists calendar. So, during the 2016 Get-together in Perth, Victorian field nats were observing the process involved in running such an event.

The following are reports of the experiences of Peter and Claire Dalman on Day 3 of the Get-together and the event in general, sent to the editor as they continue to travel in Australia. This is their contribution to the newsletter about the ANN. Other contributions will be in later editions of the newsletters.

ANN Perth Day 3, Mon 3 Oct

Toodyay and Wongamine Nature Reserve.

Toodyay was the furthest travelled from our base, Woodman Point with the trip crossing the three dune systems on the coast and travelling up the Darling Scarp. We were met by members of the Toodyay Naturalists Club. After morning tea, supplied by the local CWA it was off to Wongamine Nature Reserve.

A one-way walk provided the opportunity to see some native orchids and numerous other plants in the reserve. Some Toodyay club members were also wildlife carers so we were treated to young animals they were caring for at the lunch break and also during afternoon tea at the CWA hall. The afternoon concluded with time to explore the lovely little town and its shops with many of us helping the local economy.

On return there was the opportunity to handle and photograph invertebrates displayed by the evening speakers, David and Fleur Knowles from Spineless Wonders who addressed the group on the topic: *Jewel Beetles, Peacock spiders and other invertebrates*. There are over 1000 species of Jewel beetles with 400 in Western Australia and the presentation provided a rapid sequence of pictures and commentary about these and other invertebrates. The curious creatures were still available the next morning for us to examine and photograph again.

Claire & Peter Dalman

From Claire Dalman -

I enjoyed our 2016 ANN gathering and am grateful to all those people who made it happen. It is reassuring to see folk well into their 80s who can still manage the fairly constant regime for more than a week. Quite a few people succumbed to a respiratory illness which was disappointing and a few ticks were annoying but I think most people would have found the time rewarding. It has been a spectacularly good year for wildflowers so finding them was easy. Identifying them has been challenging. Luckily the WA Nats, very ably led by Yolanda Keeble as well as everybody else's shared knowledge, sorted out most of them. I was delighted that 15 Chinchilla nats attended - it was great to catch up with them after our 2010 ANN that we enjoyed so much. The venue was of interest, having been a quarantine station. There were some grim and sad days in its past. The area is large; with many fine buildings beautifully maintained and with an architecturally fascinating dining / meeting room. (See background in photo below. Ed). Our trips and speakers were varied, as was the weather. A good mix should have suited most people. Well done WA Nats.

Below is a photo of the Ballarat field nats dressed in their ANN uniforms, who were taking note of how things are done to host an ANN Get-together.

L to R: Les H, Claire and Peter D, Val H, Fran H, Elaine and John G



Excerpts from October Club Meeting Minutes

Opening and Apologies

Attendance: Acting President Bill Elder welcomed 21 members to the meeting **Apologies:** Fran Hanrahan, Peter & Claire Dalman, Bill Murphy, John and Elaine Gregurke, Les Hanrahan, Val Hocking, Mike Sorrell, Lyn Sommerlad, Annette Riddell, Mike Landry, Renee Winton, Wayne McGuire, Genny Binns, Steve Sorrell, Elizabeth Thurgood.

Business Arising from Previous Meeting:

Emily to give Elspeth a copy of the USB stick that has 900+ plant records from the Castlemaine district. Pending.

Correspondence: IN

From Susan Kruss, Fed U. PhD candidate: link to survey to provide feedback on the Lake Wendouree Master Plan. From Roger Thomas, FNCB member: plans to keep an eye on Mt Misery Garden in Enfield SP and information about Callitris populations in Enfield SP/ SF.

From Jane Bevelander: Invitation to “Breathing Life Back into the Yarrowee” project tour, Sept. 18; information about substantial grant project called “Scotsburn Phoenix Project” in the Scotsburn fire zone.

From Helen Lewers, WHAM: Agenda for Sep 12 meeting; Minutes of April, May & Aug meetings; AGM Minutes from June 10; summary of changes adopted by VicRoads in response to the ECG and other community or expert input; condemnation of vandalism of VicRoads’ equipment; publishing of letters to the editor in The Courier, purportedly on behalf of WHAM, but not authorised or sanctioned by WHAM.

From Phil Rayment, Latrobe Valley FNC: First circular about SEANA Autumn Camp, 2017 in Sale, accommodation options and registration form.

From Elspeth Swan, DELWP: information about a community-based survey of the status and distribution of Australian water-rats (rakali) being undertaken by the Australian Platypus Conservancy.

From C. Morley, Geelong FNC: bird list from our combined field trip and request to remove Black Falcon from the list pending further confirmation.

From Kate Davis, Parks Victoria: invitation to comment on the proposed new name for Canadian Regional Park, “Woowookarung” acknowledging the traditional owners of the area; fact sheet about Canadian RP and the proposed new name.

From Anthony Byrne, Corangamite CMA: letter seeking supporting information for the proposed extension to the boundary of the Western District Lakes Ramsar site to include Cundare Pool/ Lake Martin.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

No-one provided any records that would support the extension of the Western District Lakes Ramsar site to include Cundare Pool/ Lake Martin?

No-one agreed to represent our club at the presentation of the Australian Natural History Medallion at the FNCV hall in Blackburn on the evening of Monday Nov. 7

There are some copies available of the first circular, registration form and

accommodation options for the SEANA Autumn Camp, 2017.

Any recommendations for places for the Latrobe Valley FNC to visit in the Otways in October? Mait's Rest, Shelly Beach at low tide, Apollo Bay Information Bureau.

Opportunity to comment on the proposed name change of Canadian Regional Park 'til Oct 14.

Reports:

Treasurer's Report: Opening bal: \$8,066.27; Inc \$25.00; Exp. \$35.75; Closing bal: \$8,055.52

ANGAIR Wildflower Show: Big crowds, beautiful wildflower display in the hall and in the bush for the guided walks, great information stalls, second hand book sale and art show.

Australian Society for Limnology Conference: First ever Indigenous Water Knowledge session. Fascinating, inspiring and very encouraging. Great to see some progress being made towards not just environmental flows but cultural flows by land & water management agencies. Two FNCB members were amongst the several hundred attendees.

Friends of Canadian Corridor Wildflower Walk, Oct. 2: 29 people attended a walk led by Roger Thomas, including 6 FNCB members. Many birds were seen and heard, including a nesting Currawong, and wildflowers included Early Nancies, Trailing Goodenia, Purple Coral-pea, wattles, Pink Bells, Tall Sundews, Golden Bush-pea, Common Beard Heath and Tall Greenhoods.

Draft Lake Wendouree Master Plan: Three Club members responded, making the comment that it was a time-consuming process made more difficult by the shortening of the feedback time period due to the Caretaker period coming into force in Council. Concerns were raised about the creation of a man-made beach, possible loss of wetland areas, lighting and the fact that decisions looked like they would be made as a result of popular vote rather than sound land management practices.

Show & Tell/ Field Reports

Carol found two Black Swans nesting at the end of the spit in a very full Mullawallah Wetlands (Winter Swamp).

Andy found lots of morels, a result of the wet conditions, in Kara Kara National Park near Stuart Mill. He had also been delighted to see a Marble-faced Legless Lizard, Common Spade-foot Toad, Bearded Dragon and Bynoe's Gecko on a recent trip to western NSW.

Denis has just travelled east across the Simpson over the 1100 dunes, saying that the only sign of being in the desert was the Simpson Desert sign, with stunning wildflowers covering every inch of sand. The dunes started off covered in daisies, transitioning to native white-flowered Stock.

Ambika and Indra had holidayed in the Barmah Forest, where the Murray River is 25km wide at the moment, and they had to travel by boat along the walking tracks. Despite there being wetlands everywhere, they didn't see many birds.

CALENDAR 2016

November

- Fri 4 *Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture: Victorian Volcanic Plains Grasslands ecology and conservation -*
 Dr. John Morgan, Grassland ecologist, Latrobe University
- Sun 6 *Exc. Vic. Volcanic Plains Grassland, Rokewood Corindap - Emily Noble, club member*
- Tues 22 Committee meeting at Fran's

November

- Fri 2 Mineral madness - Steve Sorrell, club member
- Sun 4 *Exc. Afternoon at Canadian Forest & Buninyong Gardens for Christmas breakup - J Mildren & F Hanrahan*

Committee

President	John Gregurke	
Vice Pres	Fran Hanrahan	
Secretary	Emily Noble	
Treasurer	Les Hanrahan	
Claire Dalman		Val Hocking
Peter Dalman		John Mildren
Bill Elder		Andy Arnold

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email: Secretary:- Emily Noble

Editor: Fran Hanrahan

Website: <http://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com>

Club email: ballaratfnc@gmail.com

Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr of Gillies and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts. at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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